



Senate Majority Office

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Press Contact:

Tess Seger, Tess.Seger@oregonlegislature.gov

Senate Passes Bipartisan Wildfire Prevention and Protection Package

SALEM, Ore. – This week, the Oregon Senate passed a package of legislation that builds on the work that previous legislatures have done to protect our communities from devastating wildfires. With this new legislation, lawmakers are focused on improving our emergency management system and encouraging wildfire preparation and education.

[House Bill 2522](#) directs the State Fire Marshal to conduct a full overview of rural fire protection-related laws to modernize and streamline our processes and programs. It has been more than 65 years since Oregon’s rural fire protection codes have been reviewed for modernization. Rural fire protection is facing many challenges and this bill will act as a step toward remedies.

“Our society and the wildfires we face are much different today than they were in the 1950s,” said **Senator Jeff Golden (D-Ashland)**, chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources. “It is time to modernize these programs and streamline our fire-protection response in rural areas. It is a basic matter of public safety.”

[House Bill 2484](#) sets up better coordination of Oregon’s urban search and rescue program to save lives when catastrophic events occur and requires the department to study the needs of the program. This increased coordination will help fill gaps in our search and rescue teams that our current local fire departments are not able to carry out.

“Climate-related disasters in Oregon are on the rise. In the face of extreme heat, wildfires, winter storms and floods, we must act to mitigate the impact of future accidents and disasters for the safety of all Oregonians,” said **Senator Deb Patterson (D-Salem)**.

[House Bill 2902](#) encourages wildfire preparation and recovery to be taught in schools to better prepare Oregon students for fire emergencies. Currently, schools are encouraged to prepare students in case of earthquakes, tsunamis, safety treats, and other regional-specific natural disasters.

“Unfortunately, we live in a state where devastating wildfires are all too common,” said **Senator James Manning (D-Eugene)**. “Hopefully, by teaching our students about wildfire safety, they can bring that knowledge home and help all of our families feel a little more prepared for future wildfire seasons.”

[House Bill 3485](#) makes the Oregon State Fire Marshal its own entity to improve wildfire response, collaboration across the state, and customer service.

“The Oregon State Fire Marshal’s Office plays a critical role in emergency management coordination in Oregon,” **Senator Floyd Prozanski (D-Eugene)**. “By making them more independent, we can improve collaboration, expedite our emergency responses, and save lives.”

[House Bill 2294](#) will dedicate \$20 million to establish grants for local communities to develop firefighter apprenticeship programs to address Oregon’s firefighter shortage, reduce barriers to hiring, and improve diversity within our firefighter troops.

“As our communities and families faced devastating wildfires, Oregon has not been able to keep up with enough firefighters on the front lines,” **Senator Aaron Woods (D-Woodburn)**. “By investing in our local communities today, we will better prepare our state for potential future disasters.”

Protecting Oregon communities from wildfires is a key component of [Senate Democrats’ 2023 Oregon Works agenda](#).

HB 2484, HB 2522, HB 2902, HB 3485, HB 2294 are some of the hundreds of bills that Senate Democrats rescued by negotiating an end to the Senate Republican walkout. Thanks to Senate Democrats showing up, doing their jobs, and delivering results for the people of Oregon, these bills now move to the Governor’s desk for consideration.

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